

Chapter 8

Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Lifetime spanned the boundary between the Classical and the Romantic eras in music.

He wrote in both styles.

His music benefited from changes in the Romantic era, but he was also responsible for some of those changes.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

He transformed the Classical genres and developed them beyond their previously accepted limits.

He enlarged the orchestra, changed musical structures, added a chorus to the symphony, and told narratives with instrumental works.

His music was uniquely his own.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Born in 1770 into a family of musicians.

Both father and grandfather were court musicians for the Elector of Bonn, Germany.

He studied organ and composition and helped look after the instruments. During this time he began to compose--mostly songs and chamber music.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1790--Met Haydn in Bonn and went to Vienna to study with him in 1792.

Lived in the palace of Prince Lichnowsky where he eventually was able to work and compose as he pleased.

Between 1792 and 1802 (his early period) he composed mostly keyboard and chamber music.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1802-1812--Beethoven's "middle period"--wrote 6 symphonies, 4 concertos, 5 string quartets, and opera (*Fidelio*), some orchestral overtures, and several important piano sonatas.

1802--discovered he was going deaf.

By 1817--was completely deaf. No longer able to perform or conduct, but kept composing.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Middle phase (1802-1812) is often called his “heroic” phase.

His piano concertos were written so he could perform them.

Many compositions from this period were very long. They were also strong and patriotic.

Beethoven became very famous during this period.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1815--his brother died and he began a long fight for custody of his nephew, Karl; he won custody, but parenting didn't work out.

In his later years (1820-1827), he composed his last three piano sonatas, the Ninth Symphony, and a series of string quartets.

Piano sonatas are unusual in form and design, with juxtapositions of complexity and simplicity.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

The Ninth Symphony (1824) was a huge work with a chorus and four vocal soloists in the fourth movement.

Text of the 4th movement is based on a poem by Schiller--(*Ode to Joy*).

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Last 3 years were devoted to string quartets, believed by many to be his greatest and most challenging music.

- ◆ Moments of tenderness and great beauty
- ◆ Passages of dissonant harmonies and rhythmic complexity

At age 56, Beethoven died.

Beethoven's Music

Represents the essence of serious music.

His music is played, written about, and recorded more frequently than the music of any other composer in the world.

Before he went deaf, he was one of the foremost piano virtuosos of his age.

Beethoven's Music

Traits of his music that can be instantly recognized:

- ◆ Long powerful *crescendos* that seem to carry the music forward.
- ◆ Themes that sound exactly right but also sound different when played quietly or loudly.

Beethoven's Music

Traits of his music that can be instantly recognized:

- ◆ Dramatic use of classical structures, such as sonata form.
- ◆ Sudden key changes that fit into logical harmony.

Beethoven's Music

Most famous music is from the middle period.

- ◆ Symphonies Nos. 3-8

Third is called *Eroica*-“Heroic”)

- ◆ 5th symphony is his most famous work.

- ◆ Middle string quartets

Beethoven's Music

Most famous music is from the middle period.

- ◆ The 4th and 5th piano concertos (5th is called *Emperor*)
- ◆ Opera, *Fidelio*, about a woman who saves her husband from unjust imprisonment

Beethoven's Music

Most famous music is from the middle period.

- ◆ Some of the music is quite lyrical.
- ◆ Example is the 6th Symphony, the *Pastoral*, which has passages of great tenderness.
- ◆ It was not uncommon for him to juxtapose tenderness and strength in the same composition.

Beethoven's Music

Music of the late period (1820-1827) is less well known, and there is less of it.

Ninth Symphony, *Missa Solemnis* (a Mass), the late piano sonatas, and the last 5 string quartets.

Beethoven was concerned with following his own path of creativity wherever it may lead.

Beethoven: *Six Easy Variations on a Swiss Tune in F Major for Piano*

Tempo: *Andante con moto* (“Fairly slow but with motion”)

Meter: 3/4

Key: F Major

One of many sets of variations written in the early years.

Beethoven: *Six Easy Variations on a Swiss Tune in F Major for Piano*

Theme: based on a simple, attractive Swiss tune--two 3-measure phrases answered by a phrase of 5 measures.

Variation 1: triplets in both hands

Variation 2: melody the same but accompaniment in left hand jerky and march-like

Beethoven: *Six Easy Variations on a Swiss Tune in F Major for Piano*

Variation 3: minor key, played smoothly and quietly

Variation 4: back to major key; octaves in right hand with triplets in the left

Variation 5: eighth notes with some syncopation and chromatic notes

Variation 6: dynamic contrast, 16th notes, and trills

Beethoven: *Fifth Symphony in C Minor*

First movement: Opening motive is 4 notes: short-short-short-LONG.

In some form or another, this motive can be found in all the other movements.

Symphony starts in c minor but ends in C major--a triumphant ending.

Last movement adds several instruments to the orchestra to add to the sense of triumph.

Beethoven: *Fifth Symphony in C Minor*

Two further techniques promote unity among the movements:

- ◆ Instead of being separate, the last two movements are linked with no pause between them.
- ◆ The theme of the third movement is quoted in the fourth.

Beethoven: *Fifth Symphony in C Minor*

All of these unifying techniques were new to the symphony genre when Beethoven composed them.

This symphony set the stage for music as an expression of a personal point of view rather than as the objective presentation of an artistic creation.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--1st Movement

Tempo: *Allegro con brio* (“fast and vigorous”)

Meter: 2/4

Key: C minor

Form: Sonata-Allegro

Orchestration: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--1st Movement

The short-short-short-LONG motive is heard throughout the movement. It is the first theme.

The second theme is announced by a horn call. This theme is quiet and smooth, but the cellos are playing the short-short-short-LONG motive underneath.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--1st Movement

Development section is created around the opening motive and the horn call, breaking the call down into smaller and smaller pieces until only a chord is left.

Movement includes a coda, which brings it to an triumphant end. Coda has completely new theme.

Movement includes long crescendos and short passages of quiet music, giving contrast and drive to the piece.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--2nd Movement

Tempo: *Andante con moto* (“Fairly slow but with motion”)

Meter: 3/8

Key: Ab Major

Form: Modified theme and variations

- ◆ Two themes are varied instead of one.
- ◆ First theme is songlike in low strings.
- ◆ Second theme starts softly but becomes a fanfare; played by clarinets and bassoons.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--2nd Movement

Variations of the these 2 themes:

- ◆ Changes in mood
- ◆ Changes in instrumentation
- ◆ Changes in structure

Coda has dynamic contrast, ending with a long crescendo and a short final cadence.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--2nd Movement

Theme A: lyrical melody in Ab Major.

Theme B: two part theme, also in Ab Major.

Variation 1: A theme--with smooth, continuously flowing rhythm with long notes on the clarinet

Variation 1: B theme--clarinet and fanfare part presented with more active accompaniment

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--2nd Movement

Variation 2: A theme--smooth, flowing rhythm, twice as fast as the first variation

Variation 2: B theme--brass fanfare heard with timpani rolls; C major

Variation 3: A theme--violins play melody while woodwinds imitate.

Coda: starts with faster tempo; includes both theme A and 1st 3 notes of theme B.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--3rd Movement

Tempo: *Allegro* (“Fast”)

Meter: 3/4

Key: C minor

Form: Scherzo and Trio, with
transition

Scherzo means “joke”--faster than a
minuet but in same basic form

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--3rd Movement

Scherzo--starts hesitantly, but horns then have repeated-note figure that is taken up by whole orchestra; rhythm is short-short-short-LONG, but tune is different from movement 1.

Trio--combines two features of first movement--opening short-short-short-LONG motive and the horn call.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--3rd Movement

Scherzo return: music is played very quietly; gradually gets louder and more vigorous leading to large climax.

Transition to last movement--no break between these movements

- ◆ Long, low string tone, very soft (*ppp*)
- ◆ Violin melody, based on opening of scherzo, rises in pitch, changes from minor to major with rapid crescendo on sustained chord going straight to movement 4

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--4th Movement

Tempo: *Allegro* (“Fast”)

Meter: 4/4

Key: C major

Form: Sonata

Orchestration: 3 trombones, a piccolo,
a contrabassoon added to orchestra
for this movement

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--4th Movement

Very triumphant sounding movement, especially because of the added instruments

Exposition--4 themes, 2 in each key (C major and G major)

Development concentrates on the third theme.

Between development and recapitulation, Beethoven includes music from the scherzo.

Beethoven: *Fifth* *Symphony*--4th Movement

Recapitulation--brings back all 4 themes.

Coda--starts with more development of theme 3, continues with a variant of Theme 2 in imitation, followed by rapid piccolo scales, then by part of theme 4, and finally a faster version of theme 1, ending with pounding chords.

Beethoven's Orchestra

In the time of Haydn and Mozart, the orchestra consisted of a string section (violins, violas, cellos, and basses), a wind section (pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns), and occasionally trumpets and drums.

Beethoven expanded this. For example, in 5th Symphony--added trombones, piccolo, and contrabassoon.

After Beethoven, orchestras were greatly expanded.